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ABSTRACT

Evaluation of principals' performance has not kept pace with changes in schooling or with developments in teacher evaluation. Although some argue that schools' complexity makes outcomes-based evaluation of principals unrealistic, the need increases for tying evaluation to accountability. This paper describes one possible model based on principals' interactions with schools' social systems and on organizational socialization and leader/follower interaction theories. In the first section, some dynamics shaping this social context/student achievement connection through principal evaluation are examined in a brief summary of principal evaluation systems and a review of scarce literature. The second section outlines a few principles drawn from scholarship on the social and organizational influence of formal leaders. The third section discusses implications of this literature for an evaluation framework based on leader/school interaction and highlights the importance of effective work relationships, principals' skill in performing organizational analysis, the power of the school interaction view, and the search for and assessment of desired outcomes. The concluding section suggests the need for developing a best professional practice standard and applying it to improve principal evaluation. (41 references) (MLH)

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THE SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS: EVALUATING PRINCIPALS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CRITERIA

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
San Francisco, April 1992

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THE SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS: EVALUATING PRINCIPALS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CRITERIA

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Principals lead institutions that are among the most important in our society. They fill a pivotal role in schools that often includes responsibility for teacher evaluation. Evaluation of principals' performance has not kept pace in focus, sophistication, or reliability, however, with changes in schools and schooling or with developments in teacher evaluation. Principal evaluation remains an underdeveloped aspect of education research and development (Duke & Stiggins, 1985). While some argue that the complexity of schools makes principals' evaluation on the basis of outcomes unrealistic, the need increases for models that tie evaluation more closely with valued outcomes. With expanding diversity of structure and goals among public schools, growing popularity of site-based management and parental governance committees, and mounting demands for accountability for outcomes rather than procedural compliance from schools, these needs can only grow. In the face of these needs, frameworks for principal evaluation tend to be atheoretical and idiosyncratic.

Models for tying principal evaluation to accountability for outcomes deserve exploration. This paper describes one possible model based on the interaction of principals with the social system of schools. It relies on organizational socialization and leader/follower interaction theories to explore factors that link principals' actions to the positive outcomes they seek in the schools they lead. Social interaction theories may guard against evaluation schemes that "overattend to variables that are not as important in facilitating strong educational outcomes" and recognize "the importance of the school's social context in determining student achievement" (Heck, Larsen & Marcoulides, 1990, p. 122).

The paper briefly examines some dynamics shaping this social context/student achievement connection through the evaluation of principals. First, I provide a brief

background of principal evaluation systems and the sparse basic research on principal evaluation. Most publications on the topic are in practitioner and general readership journals and books. Second, I review a few principles drawn from scholarship on the social and organizational influence of formal leaders such as principals. The implications of this literature for an evaluation framework based on leader/school interaction form the third and most extensive portion of the paper. In this section, I discussion the importance of effective work relationships, principals' skill in performing organizational analysis, the power of the interaction view of schools, and the search for and assessment of desired outcomes. I conclude with the implications of this research for a best professional practice standard and its applicability to the improvement of principal evaluation.

Background

While teacher evaluation receives tremendous emphasis in the professional and popular literature, principal evaluation languishes. Glasman and Heck (1987), Duke and Stiggins (1985), and others point out that this omission leaves education with a single dimension system -- only one group of professionals is held accountable. The teacher evaluation literature, too, shies away from outcome accountability, focusing instead on the observation of behaviors, primarily because teachers and scholars assert that teaching and learning are too complex to hold any single professional accountable for outcomes. This does not mean that principals and their superiors never talk about "outcome based principal evaluation" (Valentine, 1987), nor that behavioral objectives (Valentine, 1986), principal characteristics (Manatt, 1989), and long lists of competencies and standards of performance (Erickson, 1988) do not appear in principal evaluation systems.

These lists, characteristics, behavioral objects, and competencies in the principal evaluation literature tend to be descriptive and perceptually based. Seldom do articles about principal evaluation appear in scholarly research journals and seldom do they adhere to accepted standards of rigor for personnel evaluation research applied to a carefully collected data base (Ginsberg & Berry, 1990). They often rely on perceptual data collected from

teachers, district administrators, and parents who have little interaction with principals, (Garrett & Flanigan, 1991). Some scholars see this trend promoting a "fudge factor" (Ginsberg & Berry, 1989) that allows power and influence to affect the outcome of evaluation more strongly than do criteria related to schools' performance or outcomes. Harrison and Peterson (1986) found that this situation results in principal evaluation systems, that break down even when they are statewide and carefully monitored. Inconsistencies develop because of the differences between the nature of principals' work and the nature of the systems decoupled from context.

This inconsistency results in conflict and ambiguity. As professionals debate the merits of outcome accountability for educators, society remains undecided on appropriate measures that define student achievement. Conflicts develop in perceptions as well as the operationalization of evaluation systems. For example, Harrison (1988) found that superintendents, teachers, and others cannot agree on the clarity and positive effects of evaluation; their perceptions of the actual evaluation events differ; and principals continue to believe that superintendents rely most heavily on external measures of performance while reporting that they rely on internal measures. The importance of appropriate action-in-context remains obscure in this descriptive literature.

Research reveals means through which linkages can be explored among student learning, teacher behaviors, and principal actions in context, however. Among the frameworks applicable to this inquiry, leader organizational socialization viewed as interaction between the formal leader and the social system highlights factors that principals' superiors can use to structure more outcome-oriented evaluation systems.

The Social and Organizational Influence of Principals

The traditional search for principal effects on schools has failed to shed much light on how principals affect teachers' and students' actions and, subsequently, school outcomes. One promising approach for advancing this research can be found in theories of social interaction

that lead to heightened social influence by formal leaders--social validation of authority and cultural leadership. Blau (1964) asserted that healthy interaction among leader and followers creates group pressures that strengthen the leader's power of control and legitimate or endorse her authority. Schein (1985) argued that perceptive, sophisticated social analysis by leaders can promote the use of an organizational culture to identify, pursue, and achieve valued goals. This social influence may be the most important function of leadership. Both scholars focus their attention on the interaction of the leader with the group around issues of importance to the social whole and on leadership as a form of endorsed social influence (Dornbush & Scott, 1975; Scott, 1987).

In the discussion that follows, I examine principal social influence in interaction with the school, its potential impacts on teachers' and students' beliefs, perceptions, descriptions of their educational lives and actions, and pivotal considerations for the practice of educational administration. Policy makers should attend to these issues when designing training and assessment systems for principals and principals should attend to them when working to influence teacher and student outcomes (Hart, in press; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Smith & Peterson, 1988). Examples are drawn from the research on principal instructional leadership, socialization, and effects. A number of themes from the sociology and social psychology literature frame the discussion, among them:

> (1) An effective principal can only achieve influence beyond the ordinary, minimum levels enforced by formal authority when his leadership has been endorsed or legitimized by teachers and other members of the school organization and validation is a social, not an individual, process; (2) Principals can learn to analyze and shape the social processes that lead to validation by the school as a social unit; (3) Current practice for educating, appointing, and socializing principals promotes a custodial response from principals and promotes conventional behavior that limits the creativity and innovation necessary to improve student and teacher outcomes; (4) Districts can

design training and socialization experiences for principals that enable role and content innovation and the development of creative new solutions to school problems; (5) The need for a principal to respect the existing school culture and work within it and the need for change and innovation will conflict. Principals should be aware of and plan to deal with this conflict. They also should be able to deal with the constant tension between the stability of the social group and their own potential contribution and individual creativity; (6) A major mechanism through which principals can help shape outcomes is through social information processing and sense making--the development of a "shared reality" within the school social group that affirms achievement of goals; (7) Management research reveals that the leaders who tend to be most successful in their organizations also tend to experience personal change and growth as they influence organizational outcomes. Development is a two-way, interactive process; And (8) social influence behavior and outcomes can be observed, documented, and used as part of principal accountability and evaluation criteria (Hart, in press, 1991).

Leader/School Interaction as an Evaluation Framework

Like other professionals, the actions principals take are appropriate or inappropriate in a given context. They cannot be decoupled from the school the principal is assigned to lead. One can ask when evaluating whether a principal's actions are justified whether accepted standards of professional behavior would lead another principal to similar conclusions. Like McKensie Dungan, the reasonable fox whose case is studied by all first year law students in their introduction to tortes, principals should to be held to a standard of behavior consonant with those in similar circumstances. Standards tie knowledge and action to context. This absolute reality requires principal evaluation frameworks that acknowledge the importance of actions taken in context under unique circumstances. (Later I tie this argument to a call for a best professional practice standard.)

Common principal evaluation schemes, on the other hand, often emphasize processes such as student behavior management and control and communication skills. They highlight congruence and conformity -- loyalty to superiors and personal appearance. The most common criteria used to evaluate principals, superior and patron satisfaction, also are the most frequent causes for dismissal! As I briefly discussed in the background section of this paper, the popular professional literature reveals how very suspect such systems are, as authors describe the obfuscation and power of the "fudge factor" (Ginsberg & Berry, 1989).

Another major influence over principal evaluation accompanied the effective schools literature in the late 1970s and 1980s. Almost as it hit the presses, the effective schools research highlighted the imperative that context must be part of any comprehensive attempt to evaluate the appropriateness and utility of principals' actions. Effective principals were described by scholars of effective schools as strong and directive leaders who set high but attainable standards and then resolutely held teachers and students accountable for reaching them (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Edmonds, 1982). Immediately, critics noted that the research on which these recommendations were based was conducted in urban elementary schools. These schools faced formidable challenges, unquestionably. Yet findings were generalized to other settings with very different problems.

Effective Working Relationships

These context problems with principal evaluation models illuminate the central functions that can be served by an interaction perspective on principal evaluation. First, a principal's work often is decoupled from the teaching and learning experience. Principals exert little direct control over the teaching and learning process, even as they function as the focal point of organizational processes and governance (Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Martin & Willower, 1981). They lack the absolute power or even direct influence that allows causal linkages (even inferred causal linkages) to be drawn with confidence. Thus, indirect interaction links become more important.

Second, others besides the principal may function as instructional leaders in effective schools (Duke, 1987; Edmonds, 1982). To attribute any gains in student achievement to principals would be impossible. This reality directs attention to the group and to the principal's ability to affect the group's concerted effort toward improvements in student outcomes. These two features of schools -- that (1) the principal's work is indirectly linked at best to actions immediately leading to student achievement and that (2) others, too, can function as instructional leaders in schools -- require that principal evaluation focus on other social and individual dynamics.

A more appropriate focus, effective working relationships, relies on the power of the school social system to affect students' work and learning. The interaction between the principal and the school social unit is within the influence of a principal amenable to study assessment, and known to affect the actions and outcomes of organizations. Superintendents and other supervisors can examine principals' use of organizational analysis techniques that can enhance their success as school leaders and provide opportunities to promote the instructional practices and goals values by the school district.

This emphasis may be played out in several ways. First, principals can provide evidence that they have examined and understand the unique professional goals and aspirations of the school's faculty. These professional aspirations can be marshalled as resources for facilitating and improving student outcomes.

Second, principals can identify key spokespersons for the faculty, opinion leaders, outliers, and respected opponents to demonstrate their ability to conduct and use organizational analysis to understand the school, its culture, and its most powerful functioning mechanisms for accomplishing goals. They can use this information to plan exchange sessions with other principals, to implement important school level improvement strategies and to tap the best resources the school has to offer as a resource for teachers, students, parents, and communities to achieve their goals (Schein, 1985).

Third, principals can prepare in written or oral form a cultural analysis of the school, a description of shared realities, beliefs, and values along with diversions from this group assessment. These analyses can be used to identify differences, seek organizational ways of doing things that are established and accepted by the core of professionals and community members involved, and diagnose points of conflict that require attention, amelioration, or negotiation. Principals should be able to tell their superiors what norms, beliefs, assumptions, and ways of knowing and doing shape work and sense making in the school. They can then identify areas with high potential and areas in which they face major obstacles, opposition, or social system obstructions. As Schein (1985) point out, there may be no such thing as a "good" or "bad" organizational culture, but there definitely are better or poorer ways of understanding and using culture to help organizational members achieve goals.

Knowledge and use of teachers' professional values provide a fourth school social system feature on which principals' can be judged. Principals should know about teachers' professional values. These values underlie teachers' searches for opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and fulfill their professional goals.

A fifth way in which evaluation can be used to enhance and enforce principal effects on the social organization of schools relates to resources. Principals who demonstrate ways in which they have garnered valued resources needed by teachers also demonstrate how they have made a social system more effective, how they have moved toward acceptance, endorsement, and validation, and how they have promoted desired outcomes. Superiors can ask for evidence that principals are working to secure resources (staff development, information, training, reallocation of funds,...) that teachers value and use in their instructional work. In short, by evaluating organizational and cultural analyses on the part of principals and the healthy social interactions between principals and others who work in schools that follow, superiors redefine the processes and outcomes they value and refocus

principals' attention on the knowledge and skills provided in the processes they design and use.

Organizational Analysis by Principals

The successful nurturing of these effective school relationships requires that principals know their schools and that they be able to analyze and understand complex interactions. Acknowledging this complexity of leadership in organizations, Bennis (1990) said: "Sooner or later, each of us has to accept the fact that complexity is here to stay...." Complexity requires that principals develop the orientation that supports a commitment to recognizing and learning about their school organizations and a quest for the knowledge and skills necessary for insightful and penetrating organizational analysis.

Models for analyzing the culture, values, and needs of organizations exist in many forms. Qualitative research methods grounded in the (1) examination of documents, (2) open-ended and carefully planned interviews, (3) careful, iterative analyses, (4) audits of preliminary conclusions, and (5) checking for representativeness or for outliers provide a rigorous and uncomplicated model when modified for the realities of organizational life (Hart, 1986). Schein (1985) offered basic questions and methods useful to analysts interested in understanding organizational culture that can be readily adapted by administrators (Hart, in press). He asserted that cultural leadership may be the most important function of administrators, and scholars studying educational administration concur (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). Simultaneously, these organizational analyses provide hard data on which principals' work can be assessed and provide a rich foundation for discussion and intervention with the help of other educators in district organizations. Careful education and plans for analysis form the basis for this approach because the process is far from simple. Culture rests in the deep level of:

> basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic "taken-for-granted" fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment. These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problems of survival in its external environment and its problems of internal integration. They come to be taken for granted because they solve those problems repeatedly and reliably. This deeper level of assumptions ... culture ... is a learned product of group experience and is, therefore, to be found only where there is a definable group with a significant history [emphasis in the original]. (Schein, 1985, pp. 6-7)

More concrete meanings for culture mentioned by Schein also provide insight into social factors to which principals might attend. First, a principal can be asked to describe observed behavioral regularities that people exhibit when they interact. These could include the language used and the rituals surrounding deference and demeanor. Such things as the use of first names among teachers, the use of a title or degree when addressing the principal ("Dr."), or open-door expectations held by teachers for access to a principal. Second, a principal should be aware of norms that evolve in a working group. These norms can be functional or dysfunctional, but ignorance of them can cause major problems for any member of a group. Teachers who come to work early or leave late, for example, might suffer group sanctions for violating a "rate" or the norm of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay." Third, dominant values related to the work of the school such as "diversity," "individualization," or "high academic standards" shape actions and reactions of teachers and students alike. Fourth, the philosophy that guides policy formation might exercise considerable influence on principal actions. These policy philosophies include such things as "every student matters," "teachers are professionals," or "work to contract." Fifth, principals can analyze and use operative "rules" of the game. These rules must be learned by every newcomer and by every leader who expects to be accepted and eventually influence behaviors and outcomes in

schools. Finally, many find that culture includes a feeling, tone, or climate that the physical surroundings communicate and shape how members of the school interact with each other, with students and clients, or with outsiders.

In addition to these commonly shared meanings, a principal can be held accountable for coming to know and using interaction patterns that are so established as a part of the school that they are passed on to new members as if they are objective reality and a preferred part of life (Louis, 1980b). These patterns can also be dysfunctional or functional and include things like football players never take exams during fall term, or teachers use professional leave days for the elk hunt, even though policy explicitly forbids the recreational use of professional leave. Principals must analyze interactions among teachers, administrators, parents, students, and staff in order to understand and use the patterns of culture and shape actions. Schein warns leaders that they cannot expect to change culture: "Do not assume that culture can be manipulated like other matters under the control of managers. Culture controls the manager more than the manager controls culture, through the automatic filters that bias the manager's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings" (Schein, 1985, p. 314).

The manner in which principals interact within complex social systems provides grist for discussion and evaluation. Its use rests in the fundamental acceptance of socialization and leadership as interaction processes involving mutual influence.

If principals' superiors hope to use interaction patterns and hold principals accountable for understanding their school organizations, they must provide a structure and framework for principals to use in constructing their analyses. This same structure then can be used to assess principals' achievement. A process recommended by Schein (1985) for researchers seeking to analyze culture can be adapted for use by principals. Hart (in press, pp. 157-158) adapted Schein's researcher questions for principals seeking to accomplish a school analysis:

1. Early in the entry stage a new principal can structure active experiences and systematic observation and then deliberately note surprises (Louis, 1980a).
2. By using systematic observation and checking to calibrate surprising experiences, a new principal can verify that surprising events indeed repeat and are not idiosyncratic. They are part of the school culture.
3. Locate an insider who can (and is willing to) analytically decipher and explain what is going on.
4. Use insiders to reveal surprises and puzzles and to verify hunches. Avoid abstractions and generalizations.
5. Jointly explore possible cultural descriptions with others in the school to find explanations; systematically probe for underlying assumptions and patters.
6. Formalize explanations that make sense and state operational values that can be derived from observable behavior.
7. Systematically check conclusions with existing documents and records, stories, and other artifacts, in formal conversations, using systematic observations.
8. Push to the level of assumptions. Try to go beyond the articulated values of group members, and try to understand the deeper layer of assumptions behind them.
9. Perpetually recalibrate and adjust your conclusions about the culture as new data continually surface.
10. Formalize the assessment of culture through a written description.

As a principal accomplishes these tasks and reflects on them, superiors can engage in discussion and observe actions that reflect the analytical process.

Another school context factor within social community on which principals can focus and against which their actions can be measured relates to the interaction of children with their community -- its expectations and beliefs, knowledge, and culture (Medina, 1990). While

some scholars and community activists contend that schools should target their goals for the actual world in which particular kinds of children will work and live, others counter that this presents a subtle form of discrimination in the guise of cultural diversity. It also unnecessarily empowers those with a limited or narrow concept of children's potential, preventing them from attaining the levels and kinds of education necessary to break down barriers and explore completely different lives (Cuban, 1990; Hart, 1990, 1991). Communities differ in the values and in the demands they place on children, but the appropriate balance between acceptance and opportunity remains unclear. These values often include a political climate for education and beliefs about what school "leaders" should look like that exclude talented people (Hart, in press).

Response and Planning

Despite the insight these perspectives offer, developing specific means through which principals and their superiors can assess the relative success of the interaction success of a principal in context poses a challenge. Research on interaction effects between leaders and organizations suggests a number of promising criteria. First, principals can present evidence or planned interventions regarding the processing of information, interpretation drawing, and sense making related to goal definition and accomplishments. This evidence, either through interviews, field notes and written records or action plans should rely on analyses of worthy professional, cultural, and community goals combined with the principal's professional knowledge and moral and technical understanding.

Second, principals can be asked to demonstrate the ability to observe and analyze emerging student and school outcomes, evidence that they are collecting feedback and information, seeking alternative explanations for observed outcomes, and staying in touch with the expectations, beliefs, and interpretations of others. Along with this process, principals can analyze their relative "fit" with the expectations and beliefs about school leadership held by the

community, their congruence and incongruence in the setting, and interventions these analyses suggest.

This second requirement implies that principals will be resourceful and complex people. How can principals use their best resources, complexity, and knowledge to achieve group commitment to their leadership? I often use Weick's analogy of the spines of leadership when discussing this kind of reflective and interactive view of principal leadership. Weick asserted that the common carpenter's tool, the contour gauge, offers an apt image of appropriate leader behavior. In order to act appropriately, leaders most often must reflect or mirror the characteristics (e.g., values, goals, beliefs) and needs of the organization, and the more complex the leader, the more responses available to her or him, the more options for action. The contour gauge is made up of spines that, when pushed against a physical object, reflect its shape. The reflection, or rendering, can then be used to create other features of appropriate shape. A floor tile may surround a door molding; a piece of wall board may encompass a cabinet. This modeling reflects the requirements of leadership. While principals may be evaluated on the basis of outcomes, the power to accomplish goals comes from the group and so principals who are successful at effectively harnessing the knowledge and power of professionals at work are successful leaders. Weick called this passive leadership.

This view of leadership suggests that principals can be responsive, can tailor their actions to the needs of each school. Leaders' "spines" (Weick, 1978) provide a means toward this end. This responsive view of leadership accommodates talent, knowledge, and experience. In practice, each principal fears the label "not a leader" and the pressure to act a part that may be inappropriate. Images and beliefs denigrating the interactive, responsive nature of leadership plague those seeking to improve their leadership by improving their understanding and interaction with schools.

The "passive" leader Weick advocated also must know herself. Self-awareness -- about personality, talents and weaknesses, skills and knowledge, social congruities or incongruities

that affect others' perceptions in a given context -- plays an important part in this grounding of principal action in context if it is to be used as a criteria for evaluation. It also shapes the inquiry into advantages and challenges of appointing leaders who are members of a minority group or women. Briefly, demonstrated familiarity with their talents can go far in helping principals address outcome-directed behavior. Principals can: (1) Analyze superordinates, existing organizational factors, and the effects of their selection and appointment in a school; (2) tap their individual creativity and ways to change the setting; (3) capitalize on the window of opportunity that comes with a change in leadership, their own appointment to a school; (4) systematically analyze their own effect on factors that affect school performance -- and how that might best be accomplished; and (5) work to "make sense" of their actions as leaders that address outcomes rather than compliance.

The Interaction View

If one accepts the implications of research to date, this paper leads to a strong support for non-(not **un**) heroic evaluations of school leadership grounded in interaction. An interaction view of principals' responsibilities sets up a context-imbedded evaluation that rectifies many of the shortcomings of principal evaluation systems noted in the preceding discussion. It places the onus on districts that fail to provide socialization experiences (tactics) providing first-time and succeeding principals with the tools and orientation that promote knowledge about and ability to influence interaction processes and outcomes. It consequently addresses results, because traditional searches for principal effects on schools fail to shed much light on how principals affect teacher and student actions and, subsequently, outcomes. Searches focusing on interactions illuminate district effects on principals (tactics to socialize and affect behavior) and an understanding of the interaction process (how and why outcomes, organizational changes, and making sense of information affect school effectiveness). What is the shared reality? How do the professionals and students make sense of their schooling experience?

Interaction as Leadership

The homage leadership receives in our culture and in literature leads many principals to conclude that they stand alone at the epicenter of ideas, plans, actions, and culture that drive schools' performance. Experience and research belie this simple conclusion. While principals are an important factor in the school organization, their opportunities to exert influence on schools depends on their ability to understand and use their personal and social power in the particular context in which they work. As their knowledge of the social processes in which they are embroiled increases and their ability to use that knowledge to interpret and shape events grows, principals become more likely to observe and respond to critical factors central to the performance of the schools which they can influence. Consequently, principals and superiors need a heightened awareness of and experience in diagnosing and working with the powerful social forces that shape schools, districts, and communities.

Three principles relate directly to this contextual imperative. First, principals function as part of a group of expert professionals who influence each other. When the information exchange attends too exclusively to the principal, information, action, and impacts of intervention are unnecessarily limited. Second, the complexity of school/principal interactions do not make them indecipherable. While principals deal with wonderfully complex social situations, they are fundamentally and absolutely human events. Principals who choose to hone their knowledge and skill analyzing and diagnosing the social dynamics of their own and others' roles in schools can develop strategies to deal with these complex social processes (Andrews, 1971). Finally, principals who can define and understand the power of the group can tap that power. In western culture, we retain a bias in favor of "strong" leaders, assertive pioneers who strike out alone and pave the way for more timid adventurers. We seek new metaphors for leadership that affirm our heroic expectations (Beck & Murphy, in press). Yet, cultural and symbolic views of leadership exist side-by-side with these expectations and

researchers find intriguing evidence of their power in many different cultures (Bolman & Deal, in press). The group and the leader remain symbiotic, inextricably intertwined. These findings allay fears that an emphasis on interaction negates leadership (Hart, in press).

Intervention

Findings reported in the literature on leader succession and assessments of school leadership support calls for action that can be included in a model for discussion about principals' accountability for interaction leadership in schools. Assessing the principal's action plan involves:

1. Assessing the news (and the no news warnings);
2. Planning for endorsed leadership from professionals, parents, and students;
3. Demonstrating valued knowledge, skills, and characteristics -- getting to know you without showing off;
4. Avoiding the custodial response, simply recreating the past, with its interpretations and conventional solutions;
5. Diagnosing and influencing interactions, shaping information and sense making to form commonly held explanations and interpretations for events;
6. Using the window of opportunity to implement change and reform presented by change, including the assignment or reassignment of the principal;
7. Respecting the culture -- balancing the tension between individual creativity and cultural stability;
8. Attending to beliefs and interpretations;
9. Deemphasizing social incongruities and playing to your professional and personal strengths;
10. Avoiding the "in my old school, we" syndrome -- don't compare.

Looking for and Assessing Desired Outcomes

All this work is wasted if outcomes cannot be tied to actions. One way to assess the results of all this careful organizational level work emerges from the organizational socialization literature on management success as general categories of leader action -- (1) custodianship; (2) content innovation; and (3) role innovation (Hart, in press). When considered in context and weighed against the needs of the school, these categories can be used to evaluate the outcomes of principals' leadership efforts related to the school organization.

A custodial leadership response reflects the conclusion that the inherited past may have much to recommend it. A principal may find that the context warrants actions in support of survival and functional achievement (getting by). The principal simply learns the substantive requirements of the job and customary strategies to meet these requirements. Both morally and technically, to use Greenfield's terms (1985), the principal replicates the actions of her predecessors. This is by far the most common outcome when new principals succeed to a role (Hart, in press).

A response aimed toward content innovation introduces new knowledge and tactical alternatives for defining and addressing educational problems at a school. While the ends or goals remain unchallenged, the means through which the principal seeks to accomplish them change from those used in the past. Substantive changes in the knowledge base or in strategic practices may be made. While traditional norms and goals remain unchallenged, existing strategies or technologies-in-use are not.

Under some circumstances, educational problems, the environment, or demands for learning placed on students warrant a completely innovative leadership action. In such cases, the desired outcome may be role innovation, the most radical outcome change of principal-school interaction. The principal may attack and attempt to change the mission associated with the principal's role. Not only are definitions of educational problems and strategies challenged, but the norms governing conduct, responsibilities, and performance of the role and

redefinition of the ends or goals change. While this outcome is rare, it also is the most expected when reforms are initiated.

Studies of leader succession events yield evidence that the most common outcome of a new leader taking over an organization is custodial, even when this outcome is dysfunctional. The commonality of custodial outcomes may affect our use of outcome variables to evaluate principals.One of the reasons many are reluctant to use outcomes to evaluate principals may be that changes in content and structure are so difficult:

> The tendency for old-system norms to persist so that they may interfere with proper component action in a new system [is so powerful] that students of industrial and other production often recommend a thorough change of personnel in a new system rather than a retraining of the old. (Monane, 1967, p. 19)

While principals and schools depend on each other and affect and shape each other, the relative proportion of influence exerted by a principal can provide a measure of success and part of a comprehensive outcome focuses principal evaluation. The reciprocal relationship can be a source of power if a group coalesces around a principal's leadership:

> Shared feelings of loyalty and group norms tend to emerge that make compliance with [the leader's] directives a social obligation that is enforced by the subordinates themselves.... The crucial problem for the formal leader, with undeniable power, is to win the loyalty and legitimating approval of subordinates, particularly since his power may tempt him to dominate them instead of winning their respect and willing compliance. (Blau, 1964, pp. 207 and 210)

Knowledge about these social processes makes it possible to hold principals accountable for establishing effective working relationships, particularly as they take over a new assignment. Gabarro argued that "a new manager's ability to develop effective working

relationships discriminates ... strongly between ... failed and successful successions" (Gabarro, 1987, p. 166). Researchers focusing their efforts on understanding the behavior of effective principals also find substantial relationships between school context and principals' behavior (Martinko & Gardner 1984, 1987).

By using context/action fit outcomes rather than preestablished touchstones of behavior as criteria for principal evaluation (as many current systems do -- see Erickson, 1988 and Valentine, 1986), educators acknowledge the finding that schools and their norms and needs exist free of "good" or "bad" labels (Hitt & Ireland, 1987). Describing the experience principals have when attempting to affect the appropriate use and development of school culture:

> A school's culture has been created well before most principals arrive; it will exist long after most leave. Only a few principals may have the opportunity to start afresh in a brand-new school, but even then the new teachers and students will carry cultural imprints from their previous place -- as will the principal.
>
> Most principals must work with a cultural tapestry that is already woven. They must somehow reinforce thin spots or tears, shape it to cover different or changed surfaces, or even try to reverse the fabric without unraveling the shared meaning. There is a delicate balance between a principal's doing nothing and doing harm. The Chinese call this balance wei-wu, the place between inaction and undue force. (Deal and Peterson, 1990, p. 14)

Outcomes as Measures of Performance

Despite this ambiguity, schools do function. Studies who that interventions shape effects and that education professionals can take action. School reform studies provide evidence supportive of a renewed attention to outcomes as part of education evaluation. Ebmeier and Hart (1992), for example, looked at the organizational health outcomes of

structural changes in teacher work. Career ladders, they found, had a differential impact on teachers' career plans, coordination and communication, and perceptions of improved instruction. Students in the schools they studied felt less alienated. The data revealed dynamic relationships that function as intermediate variables improving student performance. Ebmeier and Hart showed that outcomes at an organizational level of intervention can be assessed. They function as a respectable focus of inquiry over time. Studies like this provide support for a continued search for organizational outcomes of principals' actions, because school leaders may be more directly tied to schools' performance than are structural changes in teachers' work and career patterns.

Summary and Conclusions -- the Best Professional Practice Standard

Rather than relying on research about principals, teachers, and students interacting in schools, principal evaluation systems have drawn their models from accreditation organizations. Lists of standards for competence or skill are developed, and competence constitutes compliance (Duke & Stiggins, 1985). Following the same principle, criteria focusing on dress and demeanor, completion of discreet tasks, and demonstrated competency in skills deemed important for principals meet excellence criteria for principal evaluation. These standards ignore the "so what" criteria. So, what happened in the school the principal was assigned to lead? So, how did teachers, students, and the community rally to promote educational achievement for the young people who attend this school? So, what educational goals were achieved that were valued by the community and the professional educators who work in the school? So, what happened?

A number of scholars challenge this placid view of principal evaluation, asking us instead to confront the bare and uncompromising outcomes of our schools. Using data to support principal evaluation based on results appropriate to the school, Duke and Stiggins (1985) argue for the "best professional practice" standard of evaluation, focusing attention on the desired outcomes and actions link, not on behavioral (or social) compliance.

This examination of principal evaluation based on the interaction of principals with the school to which they are assigned affirms their call for a best professional practice standard. Whatever the motives, morals, or beliefs of educators, the standard to which they adhere is grounded in outcomes assessed in context. The best current knowledge about teaching and learning and about management and leadership in organizations appropriately applied in each school setting provides the criteria on which such a standard is based. Schon (1983) found this context-imbedded criteria to be a hallmark of professional work. Professionals, be they managers, educators, doctors, architects, draw on a complex body of knowledge to assess a unique situation and apply that knowledge to take appropriate action, he argued. The distinguishing feature of this definition of professional work is that action must be warranted by the unique facts of a given situation. It supports a context-grounded, interactive view of principal assessment.

The outcomes of principals' actions or interventions may be social (compliance on the part of the adults who work in schools) or related directly to students' present and future achievement on valued learning criteria. Achievement outcomes address with bald vigor and honesty the absolute purpose of schools: that our children and youth learn social, scientific, and literary knowledge; that their well-being as human beings and as productive members of the social whole increases as their self-awareness and power increase. This educative process affirms and promotes their rights as human beings. A social interaction approach to principal evaluation supports a commitment to the educative process.

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